

House Energy & Commerce Committee
Subcommittee on Environment & the Economy Hearing
"Chemical Risk Assessment: What Works for Jobs and the Economy"

October 6, 2011, at 9:00 AM

Background and Purpose of Hearing:

The purpose of the hearing was to explore U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) chemical risk assessment program, the Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS), and the relationship between that program and EPA's regulatory requirements, specifically whether IRIS is producing high quality science-based risk assessments that are suitable for regulatory objectives, or policy judgments that could harm businesses and the public.

Witnesses and Testimonies:

First Panel

- Dr. Paul Anastas, AA for ORD, EPA

http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/image_uploads/Testimony_10.06.11_EE_Anastas.pdf

- Mr. David C. Trimble, Director Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Government Accountability Office

http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/image_uploads/Testimony_10.06.11_EE_Trimble.pdf%20-%20Dr.%20Paul%20Anastas,%20AA%20for%20ORD,%20EPA

-Dr. David C. Dorman, Dean for Research and Graduate Studies
North Carolina State University, National Academy of Sciences

http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/sites/default/files/image_uploads/Testimony_10.06.11_EE_Dorman.pdf

There was a second panel and their statements can be found at:

<http://energycommerce.house.gov/hearings/hearingdetail.aspx?NewsID=8961>

Members Present

| Majority | Minority |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Chairman, Cong. John Shimkus (IL) | Cong. Gene Green (TX) |
| Vice Chairmen, Cong. Tim Murphy (PA) | Cong. G. K. Butterfield (NC) |
| Cong. Gregg Harper (MS) | Cong. Diana DeGette (CO) |
| Cong. Bill Cassidy (LA) | Cong. John Barrow (GA) |
| Cong. Joe Pitts (PA) | |
| Cong. Cory Gardner (CO) | |
| Cong. Joe Barton (TX) | |
| Cong. Charlie Bass (NH) | |

Opening Remarks: Opening statement for Chairman Shimkus

http://republicans.energycommerce.house.gov/Media/file/Hearings/Environment/100611/Shimkus_Opening.pdf

Highlights:

- The majority Committee members questioned U.S. EPA's scientific system for determining the health hazards posed by chemicals and argued that it is costing the country jobs. They also stated that IRIS was overly cautious in determining the level at which a chemical poses a health risk.
- A majority member also mentioned that "EPA's new assessments may unnecessarily scare the public" and "distract" attention from real public health concerns that deserve attention".
- The minority Committee members, Panel 1 and Panel 2 witnesses (GAO, NAS, Hopkins) offered support of the IRIS Program. For example, Thomas Burke, an associate dean of The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health who also chaired a 2009 NAS panel that issued recommendations on ways to improve EPA risk assessments, with provided arguments stating why the assessments shouldn't be delayed until the program is reformed.
- Dr. Anastas reiterated that EPA is making changes to the program, but noted that NAS was clear that the program should continue to issue risk assessments despite the needed improvements.
- Dr. Anastas did get a question from a majority member (Harper, MS) asking about the difference between Chemistry and Green Chemistry.

Questions for EPA:

Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL):

- How or why is IRIS not considered a full risk assessment?
- IRIS evaluates peer review comments; do you decide what to accept?

Congressman Gene Green (D-TX):

- Will the dioxin assessment be released in January?
- Why is it being divided into cancer and non-cancer?

Congressman Joe Barton (R-TX):

- Does ORD produce science research on Ozone levels, mercury, and PM 2.5? Who decides whether the studies take place internally or externally?
- What is the EPA's definition of "premature death?"

Congressman Gregg Harper (R-MS):

- Chemistry: What's the difference between Chemistry and Green Chemistry? Are Green Chemistry courses/programs offered at Colleges?
- IRIS: Who selects the panels for review?

Congressman Butterfield (D-N.C.):

- Is IRIS a set of risk assessments, or regulations?

Congressman Pitts (R-PA):

- Is source of funding an automatic disqualifier?
- What other funding exists for high quality research initiatives?

Congressman Murphy (R-PA):

- Is EPA prepared to incorporate additional information into the chromium 6 assessment? And, will EPA delay the assessment to wait for additional studies that are being conducted?
- Is it true there is Cr6 in Stainless Steel, which is used for medical equipment and water containers?

Congressman DeGette (D-CO):

- Regarding the appropriation rider, does the Administration agree with rider? What cascading affect would it have on the IRIS Program, public health and the environment?

Congressman Bass (R-NH):

- Are IRIS assessments of high quality and are they considered highly influential?

Congressman Cassidy (R-LA):

- How does a chemical get classified as toxic? What degree of exposure classifies a chemical as a 'toxic' chemical?

Follow-up Action Items: EPA will be receiving questions for the record from this Subcommittee as follow-up to this hearing.

For more information on this hearing, visit:

<http://democrats.energycommerce.house.gov/index.php?q=hearing/hearing-on-chemical-risk-assessment-what-works-for-jobs-and-the-economy>